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## Symposium promises hope, offers scholarships for Idaho's Latino teens

IDAHO FALLS -- The annual Hispanic Youth Symposium urges Latino teens to break the cycle of poverty and seek brighter futures for themselves and their families by staying in school. Now in its 19<sup>th</sup> year, the symposium will draw about 300 Latino high school students from throughout the state to Sun Valley April 25-27. Thirteen colleges and universities (four from out of state) will participate in the outreach effort, which encourages students to pursue higher education and vie for academic scholarships.

Tom Luna, the Superintendent of Public Instruction for Idaho, will deliver opening remarks during the symposium's luncheon session (11:30 a.m. at Sun Valley Inn) on Friday, April 25. U.S. Sen. Larry Craig is scheduled to address the students during the luncheon session (12:35 p.m. at Sun Valley Inn) on Saturday, April 26.

According to the most recent information compiled by the Idaho Department of Education, the dropout rate for Latino teens is higher than that for all other ethnic groups in the state, and more than double the rate for Caucasian students. Recent information from the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs indicates Latino students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> grade continue to lag behind their non-Latino counterparts for proficiencies in reading, language skills and mathematics.

Using a bilingual format, the Hispanic Youth Symposium focuses on mentoring, dropout prevention and encouragement toward pursuing higher education. During parts of the symposium, students will engage in problem-solving skills workshops and examine possible career paths for the future. They also will interact with peers and spend time with participants who serve as role models and mentors.

Under primary sponsorship of the U.S. Department of Energy, the symposium is a collaborative effort among public employers, federal management contractors at Idaho National Laboratory, private industry, state and private educational institutions and Latino organizations from throughout Idaho.

Idaho universities and colleges represented this year are The College of Idaho, Boise State University, BYU-Idaho, College of Southern Idaho, Eastern Idaho Technical College, Idaho State University, Lewis-Clark State College, Northwest Nazarene University and University of Idaho. Out-of-state institutions are Gonzaga University, Ohio State University, Utah State University and Utah Valley State College.

The theme of the symposium is "Si Se Puede!" -- "Yes, It Can Be Done!" The Hispanic Youth Symposium grew out of a brainstorming session in the late 1980s on fighting the chronically high dropout rate of Idaho's Latino high school students. Since then, several thousand students have attended the symposium, and scholarships totaling more than \$4 million have been awarded.

Visit the Hispanic Youth Symposium Web site: <https://inlportal.inl.gov/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=1437&mode=2>

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